

**WATER SUPPLY OPERATOR CERTIFICATION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

September 17, 2015

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM in the Governor Bond Room, 2nd floor, President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield, IL.

Advisory Board members present at the meeting were:

Cynthia Munger, Operations Manager
Aqua Illinois
24650 S Western Ave., PO Box 788
University Park, Illinois 60466

Allen Wayne Nelson, Consultant
20355 Garner Road,
Virginia, Illinois 62691

Dennis Ross
Otter Lake Water Commission
6475 West Montgomery Road, PO Box 468
Virden, IL 62690

The following were also in attendance:

Amber Alexander	Faith Coalition for the Common Good
Paul Connelly	IEPA/Compliance Assurance Section
Laurie Dougherty	ISAWWA
Tatum De May	IEPA/Division of Public Water Supplies
Dave McMillan	IEPA/Division of Public Water Supplies
Andrea Rhodes	IEPA/Division of Public Water Supplies
Paul Shetley	Environmental Resources Training Center – SIUE

The Chairman thanked IPWSOA for making the arrangements for the meeting, then asked for all present to introduce themselves and briefly mention their affiliation.

Discussion was opened for old business. The Advisory Board Chairman asked the Board members present for their Ethics Training Forms which they provided.

Revisions/Amendments to Part 681

A draft, work-in-progress edition of revisions to “Title 35: Environmental Protection; Subtitle F: Public Water Supplies; Chapter II: Environmental Protection Agency; Part 681 Water Supply Operator Certification” was distributed for discussion. Of interest due to revision, the following Sections were reviewed for Advisory Board recommendations:

Section 681.200 Facility Classification as related to 2014 Statutory Changes.
IEPA mentioned that there are water systems that will change Certification status (Class B discussed).

Section 681.300 (d) and (e) Water Supply Operator Examination of Competency.

The Board and attendees discussed the pros/cons of the four hour time limit for a water supply operator examination of competency. A motion was put forward to change the time limit to five hours, was seconded, and carried unanimously by the Board.

The Board took special interest in the Part 681.300 (e) as pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Human Rights Act and discussed this in relation to recent examinees who had submitted written requests for accommodation.

Section 681.325 Examination Admission

Special notice and comment of item (e) (5) revisions barring any weapon carried to the examination room.

Section 681.505 (2) (A) and (C) Application

Discussion of full-time vs. part time employees' demonstration of experience (numbers of hours/week) and discernment of applicant's experience level by IEPA application reviewers. Also, Laurie D. (ISAWWA) asked for clarification from IEPA as to what constituted a "course" for non-college credit education. IEPA asked that ISAWWA send them as list for evaluation of credit level.

Section 681.510 (b) and (c) and Section 681.510 (2) (A) and (B) Agency Determination.

IEPA staff stated that IEPA will deny and return any certification application that is not properly filled, i.e. incomplete.

The IEPA discussed the need to statutorily declare a way to standardize how hands-on-experience is awarded to make this easier for everyone to determine. Paul S. from ERTC-SIU asked for clarification of awarding credit for "certificate" programs and IEPA felt that for these the courses may need to be specified to the IEPA for approval. It was also mentioned that the Trainer Provider Form might be revised to include information relating to awarded experience credit during the application process.

Section (B) to be revised further to read "other drinking water course work: For the completion of each drinking water treatment course, either instructor-led or self-study, offered by a non-college educational provider or other drinking water course work as approved by the Illinois EPA, the Agency shall grant six weeks of appropriate credit."

Section 681.600 Application for Reciprocal Certification

Board members asked IEPA about how reciprocity with other States is determined, especially regarding the question "If a certain State does not recognize certification reciprocity with Illinois, does Illinois recognize reciprocity from that State" and visa versa. IEPA pointed out that it is already statutorily determined in the Public Water Supply Operator's Act that if any other State does not recognize Illinois water operator certification, Illinois does not recognize certification from that state. However, the IEPA stated that they are tracking reciprocity inter-state determinations to find a reasonable way to make this work better.

Laurie D. from ISAWWA asked IEPA if Illinois will someday recognize a Professional Operator designation. IEPA stated that the Agency has given this some consideration but has noted that different States designate this status differently and that there is currently no standardized federal way to determine this as of yet so Illinois has not made a determination.

The Board Chairman noted Section 681.600 (C) regarding reciprocal certification for US Armed Forces trained water operators. IEPA stated that so far a couple of individuals who are possibly eligible have expressed interest in this.

Section 681.720 Advisory Board was discussed briefly as this has been ongoing and seen as an improvement in procedure and protocol.

Exam Formula Sheet:

Andrea R. of IEPA asked that the Board re-open discussion regarding whether or not to make available to the public a Drinking Water Operator Certification Exam Formula Sheet. Trainers and educators have inquired how an exam formula sheet might be used and when it would be appropriate. The Board noted that the IEPA Wastewater Program had made a formula sheet available quite some time ago. The Board clarified that it would allow formula sheets in the public but no one would be allowed to carry their own formula sheet into an examination site. After discussion the Board Chairman asked if there was any motion to propose that a Drinking Water Exam formula sheet available to the public. This was proposed, seconded, and passed unanimously by a quorum of the Board. Further discussion of availability determined that Drinking Water educators and associates could post a formula sheet on their website if they wished, and, in addition, ERTC's Paul S. asked if SIU could also produce poster-sized sheets and there was no objection.

At this point the Board Chairman opened the agenda and asked attendees if there were any other items to bring to the Board.

Minority Recruitment for Operators of Color

Amber Alexander of the Faith Coalition for the Common Good asked the Board what they had been doing about minority recruitment for operators of color. IEPA stated that the State does not recruit based on race, and that race is not tracked on the Drinking Water Operator Certification Application. The Operator-In-Training Certification Program was cited, which opened exam opportunities for people who did not yet have all the hands-on experience or educational requirements to be fully certified; also cited, proposed revisions to statutes regulating reciprocity that would allow military personnel to certify as drinking water operators through IEPA-approved hands-on education and experience during enlistment. ISAWWA Laurie D. offered information that her organization is piloting a Diversity Member Inclusion pilot program and that a pilot school program is planned in a North Chicago suburb that would include education, internships, testing and possible refund of fees. Paul S. of ERTC-SIU mentioned, that in collaboration with the St. Louis Metro Sewer District, a program has been initiated that will award partial scholarships to ERTC's water operator program. Amber A. asked if ERTC was the only campus with drinking water operator training/testing and this was affirmative.

Next Advisory Board Meeting

The Board Chairman stated that the next Advisory Board meeting was scheduled for March 2016 at the ISAWWA Conference, Springfield, IL.

There was a motion to adjourn, was seconded, and passed unanimously at 1:40 p.m.